

Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the South West Japan Festival Matsuri Day
Saturday September 9, 2023

(Acknowledgements)

- The Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development,
- His Worship Jaysen de San Miguel, Mayor of the City of Bunbury,
- Ms Renee Lee, Director of South West Japan Festival,
- Ms Pauline Vukelic, President of the Busselton and Sugito Sister City Association, and prominent supporter of the Japan-Australia friendship in the region,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Congratulating the South West Japan Festival 2023)

It is my great pleasure to be with you at the South West Japan Festival 2023 Matsuri Day. Held in not only Bunbury, but also Dunsborough and Busselton, this extraordinary festival featuring Japan, runs for a period of one month this year, making it one of the biggest Japanese festivals in Western Australia. The program is a showcase of both traditional as well as the newest popular subcultures of Japan. It almost feels like opening a shining treasure chest. I can see festival organizers are having great fun curating the different events. I wish to congratulate and thank the organizers for coordinating the activities with such a passion and love for Japan!

(Contribution of the Mayor)

I also pay my respect to the Mayor, His Worship Jaysen de San Miguel, who himself home-stayed in Japan as a teenage student under the Bunbury-Setagaya sister city framework, and was welcomed by a Japanese family who did not speak a word of English. The mayor told me that his memory of the warm welcome and wonderful experience in Japan was so unforgettable that he was very happy to be elected mayor of Bunbury 20 years later and to lead the Sister City relations himself, expanding the South West Japanese Festival even further.

(People to people bonds)

I was amazed when I read the result of an opinion survey by the Lowy Institute poll earlier this year that the vast majority of Australian show trust in Japan with at an incredible 85%, higher than for any other countries. In addition, Minister Bill Johnston MLA told me last week at his lecture at my residence that he does not know anywhere in the world more friendly to Japan than Western Australia. And the South West is the most active region on Japan related activities.

I was at the Shinju Matsuri in Broome last week and today I am at the South West Japan Festival. The

journey started by Japanese pearl divers humbles us all. Despite challenging days, they loved the land and people of Australia and became a bridge between the two nations. That heritage became an inspiration to many Japanese residents in Western Australian who have followed and forged friendships with many Australians. I firmly believe people-to-people bonds on the ground, based on mutual trust that has been built over the years, are the most important asset of the remarkable relationship between Japan and Western Australia.

(Resumption of Direct Flight)

It is encouraging to see the return of Japanese students is in full swing in Perth, and I believe some are participating in the South West Festival today, including Tokyo City University TAP program students.

Soon we will have the resumption of the All Nippon Airways Perth-Tokyo direct flights, connecting WA and Japan in less than 10 hours again at the end of next month. Thus, more people from Japan are expected to visit Western Australia including the South West.

Japan is already a popular destination for Australians. But the direct flight brings Japan closer to you, making it easier for you to enjoy skiing on powder snow, to visit different Matsuri special to each local town, to enjoy Japanese fashion, design, shopping, and a variety of Japanese food. So you can plan your value for money trip to Japan.

(Enjoy Matsuri Day)

Today, you have the best of Japan all at once at the Matsuri Day in Bunbury. I also wish to thank the masters and practitioners of Japanese culture for joining us today, some travelling long distances from other cities.

Thank you for your attention and let us all enjoy Matsuri Day.

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